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Viewing cable 06TELAVIV3432, FORMER PM ADVISER ON GOI POLITICAL FUTURE

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06TELAVIV3432	2006-08-28 15:53	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Tel Aviv

Appears in these articles:

[not](#)
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null
Leza L Olson 08/29/2006 09:52:48 AM From DB/Inbox: Leza L Olson

Cable
Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L

TEL AVIV 03432

SIPDIS
CXTelA:

ACTION: POL
INFO: ECON DCM DAO AMB IPSC AID ADM RSO PD CONS IMO
RES

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:JONES
DRAFTED: EXEC:SISKAL
CLEARED: NONE

VZCZCTVI220
OO RUEHC RUEHXX

DE RUEHTV #3432/01 2401553
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 281553Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5953
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 003432

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/28/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [LE](#) [IS](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: FORMER PM ADVISER ON GOI POLITICAL FUTURE

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In an August 25 luncheon meeting former PM Advisor Dov Weissglas told the Ambassador that the GOI is in political trouble because it placed too much faith in military advice and set overly ambitious goals, which were impossible for it to achieve and trapped it into continuing the war against Hizballah for too long. Nonetheless, he applauded the strategy of massive response, which he saw as discouraging future missteps by Hizballah and a sine qua non for future Israeli withdrawals from occupied territory. Despite its problems, Weissglas doubted that a vote of no confidence in the government was likely or would succeed. Instead, new elections would probably be called sometime within the next year, possibly following a successful challenge to Labor Party Chairman and Minister of Defense Amir Peretz within his own party. Weissglas discounted rumors that new parties might be enticed into the coalition in the meantime. With regard to the way forward, Weissglas argued that after a few months separation and in the context of successful contacts on operational issues, it might be possible for the GOI to enter into talks on Shebaa Farms, which were "totally unimportant" to Israel. He also thought that talks on an exchange of POW's could take place within weeks and revealed that former PM Sharon was personally favorably disposed toward talks with Syria. End Summary

¶2. (C) Former Prime Minister Senior Advisor Dov Weissglas joined the Ambassador for a 1-1 lunch Friday, August 25, and shared his observations on the current situation. They can be summarized as follows:

Current State of Play

-- The GOI is in trouble now because it over promised; the Israeli public only sees what wasn't accomplished and ignores what was. To repair the damage, the GOI should lay low for a while and focus on day-to-day governance. Any new policy initiatives now would be dismissed as "political gimmicks."

-- The basic GOI strategy of responding massively was sound. Although Hizballah has many Iranian sympathizers, it is still a mass Lebanese movement. It is impossible for it to ignore that Lebanese interests suffered greatly during the war.

-- In addition, the strong Israeli response helped disabuse Hizballah of the notion that it can keep pursuing Israel after it pulls out from an area. If Olmert had not responded the way he did, any further withdrawal from the West Bank --negotiated or not-- would have become impossible.

-- The US policy of supporting the GOI during the conflict was "just right" and is highly appreciated within Israel.

The Coalition Government's Prospects

-- The government is not in any immediate danger. It is doubtful that a no confidence vote would succeed; history shows that it is very difficult for GOI opponents to muster more than 30-40 votes due to sharp divisions among the various parties.

-- Nonetheless, new elections will probably occur within a

year, for example if Labor Party rebels succeed in defeating Amir Peretz in the party's leadership elections due next spring.

-- In the meantime, do not look for new coalition partners for Olmert's government. "Why would mice swim to a sinking ship?" (Note: there have been rumors in the press speculating that Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beteinu party might join Olmert's government.)

-- Lieberman himself told Weissglas in early July that at a minimum he would want the Defense Minister portfolio to join the government. His price would be much higher now.

What would have Sharon done?

-- It is unlikely that Nasrallah expected that Hizballah's strike would provoke a big crisis. There were too many variables that he could not have forecast, including that one of the cameras on the border had malfunctioned, allowing the Hizballah team to approach without being detected; that two soldiers would be captured alive; that the IDF would immediately launch a half-baked rescue attempt that would hit a mine and incur eight more casualties, upping the ante for Israel; etc.

-- Given the circumstances, Sharon might not have even reacted to the kidnapping of the two soldiers, certainly not immediately. If he had responded, Sharon would have known not to set ambitious goals (e.g., the rescue of the soldiers; the destruction of Hizballah) that were beyond his power to deliver. When Olmert and Peretz did, they were forced to continue military operations. The longer the war dragged on, the worse they looked.

-- Instead, Sharon would have just said that we had to punish Hizballah. Then he could have let them have it for a few days and declared victory whenever he chose.

-- Olmert and Peretz placed too much faith in what they were told and had no experience that could allow them to suggest alternatives. Sharon knew that IDF Generals always exaggerate capabilities. "Arik always said, take everything they tell you and divide it by ten." Peretz, in particular, had no such "BS detector".

Shebaa Farms

-- The Shebaa Farms are "totally unimportant" to Israelis. However, in the current circumstances it is necessary to separate any talks on them from the current crisis related to the captured soldiers.

-- Any such talks should wait "some months" and only take place in the context of perceived progress on contacts with Lebanon, e.g., through a revived Armistice Committee.

-- Similarly, any talks regarding POW exchanges also need to wait, but the delay in this case need only be a matter of weeks rather than months.

Syria

-- Contrary to his public position, in private Sharon always said that he was not personally opposed to talks with Syria. He said that he refused them to avoid undercutting the Bush administration's anti-terror policy against Syria.

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JONES